

## Introduction to de Falla's "Fantasia Baetica" Workshop Lesson

by Kaila Rochelle and Kenneth Babb

The approach to the students learning in this lesson plan is multi sensory and related to music performance, geography, music and world history.

The lesson is developed around the epic piano composition, "*Fantasia Baetica*", by Manuel de Falla. The array of sounds, intriguing rhythmic patterns and ancient sounding melodic excursions found in this piece can transform the special needs music classroom into an enchanting, musically rich environment. The "*Fantasia Baetica*" is an unusual achievement that combines folkloric and classical elements. Its musical texture evokes qualities of percussion, harp, guitar, and voice.

The central cultural theme is Spanish flamenco but has flavors of middle eastern, oriental, and gypsy music. It is a weaving together of exotic elements that create a most unique musical "fantasy."

In the liner notes from his recording of the "*Fantasia Baetica*" on Arbiter Records<sup>1</sup>, the 20th century contemporary pianist Professor Paul Jacobs writes:

Provincia Baetica was the old Roman name for Andalusia<sup>2</sup> and so a translation of the title might be "*Andalusian Fantasy*." Although the materials used are original with Falla, they strongly evoke the folk music of southern Spain: the strident, somber cante jondo sung in oriental-sounding scales, chords derived from guitar tunings, and a harsh percussive quality reminiscent of castanets and heel stamping.

I introduce the lesson with a colorful world map so we can point to geographic locations related to the music. Higher functioning students may have an awareness that there were ancient civilizations such as Rome and Greece. Discovering or imagining what the music of ancient cultures may have sounded like is interesting and fun. There is always a student who enjoys holding the map while the teacher or other students point to locations on the map.

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<sup>1</sup> Arbiter 130, "*Paul Jacobs In Recital*", <http://arbiterrecords.org/catalog/paul-jacobs-in-recital>

<sup>2</sup> Andalusia is a large region in southern Spain.

Students work together by performing in designated groups or as soloists when called upon by the teacher. There may be combinations of groups called upon for different sections and at times all groups will be playing together. The participation in the music can be both predetermined and improvisatory.

Classroom management includes solo, small group and whole group practice. Teacher, para and/or student modeling and feedback with respect to different musical tasks is essential. Students with quadruplegia can be included in this process through the use of chimes and bells that can be slipped on a finger or attached to the wrist with a velcro strap. An open tuned guitar can be used by students of many different levels, either held by the student or placed flat on a desk.

Students may improvise somewhat differently, but it is essential to understand the validity of their musical insights and imagination. Differentiated learning is easily obtained through the variety of musical activities.

In her book, An Attitude and Approach for Teaching Music to Special Learners: a Teacher's Guide to Comprehensive Music and Technique<sup>3</sup>, Professor Elise Sobol, NYSSMA chairperson for special learners, offers valuable insight about the importance of teaching special needs learners by using strategies that involve multi sensory and multi subject approaches. She writes:

Music is a language beyond words. It is mathematics in process and progress. It is the science of sound and a study of history and cultures. It is architecture of form and geometry of design. Music is an essential part of healing, giving power to the will to succeed.

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<sup>3</sup>(Raleigh NC: Pentland Press, Inc., 2001), p. 125.